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CIA needs tough leader 24

ADM. STANSFIELD Turner has an outstanding record in the U.S. Navy, but that should surprise no one.

After all, any candidate that President Jimmy Carter recommends to head the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), especially after the Sorensen debacle, must have impressive credentials.

President Carter appears to have found such a man in Adm. Turner.

In the case of any CIA candidate, however, a strong academic background and a well-regarded military record aren't enough.

What matters is how Adm. Turner views the troubled CIA, which has wandered far in recent years from its mission of analyzing and interpreting the actions of foreign countries.

Certainly his background as a Rhodes scholar and as a perceptive Navy analyst should be important to the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, which is about to start questioning the admiral. But if Adm. Turner is confirmed by the Senate, which

now appears likely, that confirmation should be preceded by some tough questioning.

When the CIA was chartered 30 years ago, its job was not supposed to be one of meddling in the affairs of other countries.

By most accounts the CIA quickly became involved in secretly intervening in foreign affairs. By the mid-1960s the CIA had meandered into domestic affairs by illegally keeping record on 10,000 American activists.

The CIA had become a creature of the Cold War belligerence of U.S. foreign policy. As a reflection of our government's attitudes towards Communist nations, the CIA zealously guarded the secrecy of its activities.

In recent years, however, CIA abuses have been widely documented by journalists and more recently by congressional committees.

Much of the blame for the CIA's adventures lies with Congress itself, which for too many years was unwilling to look closely and critically at what the agency was doing.

Congressional scrutiny isn't enough, however. What the CIA also needs is a strong-willed administrator who can rein in abuse and direct the agency to its proper tasks.

In an agency which still contains some of the "adventurers" of an earlier era, the task will be difficult. The new CIA director will be challenged by some of the old guard who don't want to see the agency change its ways.

How well Adm. Turner can do that job is a question for the Senate committee to ponder.

The committee's tendency will be to quickly rubberstamp the Turner appointment. It flexed its muscles on the Sorensen appointment, but there seem to be no serious problems with Adm. Turner's nomination.

A speedy review of the admiral's record isn't good enough, however. The CIA's abuses of power in recent years demand capable leadership, and the Senate committee should scrutinize Adm. Turner carefully to see if he can provide that leadership.